



ON THE STUDY OF STAGE DIRECTIONS IN DRAMATIC TEXTS

Gulhida Ikromova

Senior Lecturer at FerSU

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philological Sciences

Abstract

This article examines the linguistic nature and functional role of stage directions as a fundamental component of dramatic text. The study aims to identify their distinctive features in comparison with other structural elements of drama, as well as to analyze their contribution to the formation and interpretation of dramatic discourse. Special attention is given to the role of stage directions in conveying authorial intention, character psychology, and the spatiotemporal framework of the dramatic work. Drawing on existing research in Russian and Western linguistics, the paper explores the evolution, classification, and communicative functions of stage directions. It is argued that stage directions should not be regarded merely as auxiliary elements but as an essential and independent textual unit that participates in shaping the semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic organization of dramatic text. The findings demonstrate that stage directions function as a key mechanism for expressing authorial modality, guiding stage performance, and enhancing the reader's and viewer's interpretation of dramatic action.

Keywords: Stage direction, authorial remark, dramatic text, dramatic discourse, authorial modality, character speech, dramatic structure, linguistic analysis, communicative function, remark classification.

Introduction

Dramatic text occupies a distinctive place among literary forms due to its dual nature as both a written and performative structure, and within this framework, stage directions represent one of its most significant yet understudied components. Unlike dialogue and monologue, which directly convey the speech of characters, stage directions function as a special textual unit through which the



author communicates information about the characters' appearance, actions, emotions, intonation, and the spatial-temporal conditions of the dramatic action. In this respect, stage directions not only support the staging and interpretation of the dramatic work, but also serve as an important means of expressing authorial intention and modality. Therefore, the study of stage directions from a linguistic perspective is essential for understanding the structural, semantic, and pragmatic organization of dramatic discourse, as well as for identifying their role in shaping the overall meaning and communicative dynamics of dramatic text.

In a number of studies conducted in world linguistics, stage directions have been evaluated as an integral part of dramatic text and purposefully studied from a linguistic perspective. In particular, in A.V.Khizhnyak's candidate dissertation, such issues as the elements of dramatic text and the place of stage directions within this system, as well as the structural and functional-semantic classification of stage directions in F.Schiller's dramas, were examined [1].

As is well known, in the dramatic genre the author cannot intervene freely in events and actions as in the epic genre. Precisely because of this feature, the role of stage directions in perceiving drama as a complete work is particularly significant [2; 3]. The playwright's ability to directly convey the characters' thoughts and emotions to the reader is limited, and such aspects are therefore indicated by the dramatist through stage directions. In other words, stage directions are one of the means through which the author's "voice" is conveyed in dramaturgy [4]. They also serve as a direct means of influencing the director, the actors, and, at the same time, the reader. In the text of a dramatic work, they function as a means of expressing authorial modality [5].

The term stage direction originates from the French word meaning "comment" or "author's note." As is known, stage directions explain such aspects as the age, physical appearance, and inner emotional state of the characters, the intonation of their speech, as well as the conditions, time, and place in which the events unfold [6].

It is also known that the development of theatre art laid the foundation for the development of stage directions and utterances (replicas), which are regarded as the principal units of dramatic text. In the evolution of theatre, dialogue and monologue, as core components of dramatic text, underwent a number of changes. While dialogue constituted the basis of dramatic text, monologue



occupied a central place in the culmination of dramatic works [3; 7]. In contrast to these units, stage direction is recognized as a component that was formed during the historical development of drama. The main reason for this is that stage directions were not included in the composition of ancient traditional dramatic texts. In medieval dramaturgy, plays were primarily created for stage performance, and playwrights often acted simultaneously as actors or directors, giving direct instructions to performers on stage [2; 8].

Studies devoted to the evolution of stage directions in Russian linguistics emphasize that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, stage direction had begun to function as a unit expressing the author's separate instruction and describing the actions, appearance of characters, and the space and time in which events occur. Thus, it gradually developed as a component of dramatic text [9].

Research on the role of stage directions in dramatic text also notes that at the subsequent stage of their development, playwrights of nineteenth-century realist literature, particularly B. Shaw and A. Chekhov, made a major contribution [2; 3; 10]. In their works, stage directions rose to a new level of development and increasingly took shape as an inseparable part of dramatic text. In other words, "in the process of the rapid development of theatre art, stage directions fundamentally transformed theatre: the tendency toward the epicization of text in dramaturgy intensified. As a result, the differences between prose and dramaturgy significantly decreased, and dramatic works began to acquire a form closer to prose works" [7; 11; 12]. These changes in the structure of dramatic text and stage directions turned them into an inseparable part of dramaturgy and dramatic works. Studies aimed at investigating the main features of stage directions indicate that a stage direction is an authorial note inserted into the dramatic text in order to express the actions, states, and psychology of characters. It is not included in the characters' utterances and differs syntactically from monologue, dialogue, and replica, while containing a concise description of the actions and conditions of the dramatic characters [5; 13].

In dramas, stage directions play a significant role in the formation of the main character as a personality. As V.G. Belinsky noted, stage direction is one of the forms through which the author expresses themselves within the work. From this perspective, in world linguistics stage directions, which constitute the basis of the dramatic genre, have been treated as a text type, and their linguistic features have

been examined in a number of studies [4; 14]. On this basis, stage directions may be considered a traditional object of philological research.

In Russian linguistics, literature devoted to the classification of authorial stage directions shows that stage directions have been grouped according to several criteria:

1. According to their placement in the text.
2. According to their role in shaping the plot.
3. According to their function in dramatic text.
4. According to their grammatical features.
5. According to their structural organization'
6. According to their communicative function [13; 15]

L.A.Shuvalova distinguishes the following types of stage directions:

- 1) stage directions describing the place of action;
- 2) stage directions describing the physical appearance, character, and actions of the hero;
- 3) stage directions used in the meaning of commentary;
- 4) stage directions used to describe events occurring parallel to a character's monologue [13].

A.N.Zorin, according to formal features, divides stage directions into the following groups:

1. Nominative stage directions (including titles, subtitles, epigraphs);
2. Poster-like stage directions (including notes explaining the list of characters participating in the drama, their appearance, age, profession, and similar features);
3. Propositive stage directions (stage directions explaining the scene, setting, and time of the drama);
4. Interpositive stage directions (those expressing events that occur within the scene, between the movements of characters, or during a character's utterance);
5. Postpositive stage directions (those describing the final part of the dramatic work) [15].

In conclusion, stage directions in dramatic texts should be regarded not merely as auxiliary authorial notes, but as an essential structural and communicative component of dramatic discourse. They perform a significant role in conveying authorial intention, revealing character psychology, organizing the spatial-



temporal framework of the dramatic work, and supporting both textual interpretation and stage realization. The analysis of their linguistic, functional, and classificatory features demonstrates that stage directions possess independent semantic and pragmatic value within the dramatic text. Therefore, their study contributes not only to a deeper understanding of dramatic structure, but also to the broader investigation of the interaction between language, literature, and theatrical communication.

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